

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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MICON SEEKS FREEDOM OF UTILITY CHOICE FOR PINE VILLAGE RESIDENTS

INDIANAPOLIS – State Rep. Joe Micon (D-West Lafayette) announced today that he has filed legislation for consideration in the 2006 Indiana General Assembly that will give communities like Pine Village more flexibility in determining who will provide their utility services.

Micon said House Bill 1054 comes in response to the rising dissatisfaction that Pine Village residents feel for the service they receive from the Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO). The lawmaker recently moderated a town meeting where residents detailed a series of concerns about the company, particularly in its poor response to emergencies.

"There have been numerous occasions after storms when NIPSCO has failed to repair downed power lines in a timely fashion," Micon said. "By taking several hours to respond to any calls, it makes it difficult for local officials to clear roads or help people who might be in trouble.

"I know that Pine Village is at the end of the utility's service area, but I fail to see why that should be an excuse for the company to take its time to address any sort of power loss, particularly if it might place residents at risk of losing their lives," he continued. "Considering the rising cost of utilities, it is infuriating that we should be forced to accept anything less than their best efforts."

At present, there is no recourse available through the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC) to communities that wish to exchange service providers. Micon's proposal would give Pine Village and other areas the right to petition the state agency for a change.

"In Pine Village's case, there is a provider (Warren County REMC) that serves most of the surrounding area, and it would make sense to have that utility take over control of the community's service," Micon said. "NIPSCO doesn't seem interested in making that switch, but I think we must pay attention to what will provide the greatest benefits to the people of Pine Village.

"At the very least, this legislation would give the residents of an area another opportunity to register their concerns about a utility's shortcomings with state officials who have some regulatory control," he noted. "People should receive the utility service they pay for, and they should not be held hostage to the whims of a company that has demonstrated a distinct lack of interest in being responsible."

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This news release can be accessed on the Internet at www.IN.gov/H26